

PHILOSOPHY

as a Destabilizing Inquiry

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PART ONE

QUO VADIS? WHERE AM I GOING WITH THIS?

I take as a “jumping off place” for this reflection the Conclusion that Werner Brock, (Dr. Phil.) made to his lectures published as *An Introduction to Contemporary German Philosophy*.¹ Following the observation of J. H. Muirhead in the Foreword, that “readers will draw their own conclusions from his presentation of his subject in this book,” I am sufficiently convinced of the merit of Brock’s lectures that I quote the Conclusion in its entirety as a foundation for the philosophical thinking I develop in this brief book.

CONCLUSION

*The still undecided position of Philosophy among the
determining factors in human life.*

In the foregoing studies an attempt has been made to outline the gradual development of German philosophy since the time of Hegel. I was led to do this not only by the desire to introduce to my readers the work of some men which has not hitherto been described, but also by the hope that what has been

¹ Cambridge University Press, 1935. Werner Brock was a lecturer at the University of Freiburg.

accomplished during nearly a whole century in the realm of German thought, and the effects of which have until now been felt mainly in that country, may also be of some value outside Germany. And indeed the point of view from which this development of German philosophy seems to be especially worthy of attention is the sense of uncertainty prevalent to-day, as to the significance of philosophy for the lives of men. Accordingly, I propose to end this account with a brief survey of the forces which must be expected to determine human life in the future.

Some of these forces are already apparent:

- (1) The importance of *technique*,² which enables us to satisfy our physical wants and by which men are brought into closer external contact than ever before.
- (2) The importance of *economic processes*, by which men try to gain the means of supplying their needs, and which, still more than technique, link men together within a nation and within the world.
- (3) The importance of the single *State* internally and externally: internally as the unit in which power over numberless human beings is concentrated, and in which men struggle in manifold groups and organizations for their share in manifold groups and organizations for their

² All italics are in the original.

share of power and for the preservation or alteration of their government; externally as the unit which, in alliance with, or in opposition to, other States, makes effective its concentrated power in a manner which cannot be foreseen or directed by any individual.

- (4) The importance of those *peoples outside of Europe* who, whether they have been formerly subjugated or awakened by Western culture and civilization, have been trying since the middle of the nineteenth century and increasingly since the War to make their political power and their own civilization effective, independent of, and possibly against Europe.

Besides all these basic realities, there remains the undoubted importance of *science*, which investigates reality in its factual connections, and which is bound to be pursued, especially in the physical and biological-medical sciences, if only for practical reasons.³

While all these factors — improbable contingencies aside — will continue as part of the life of Western man, the fate of

³ Brock's observation about the future role of Science has been proven accurate by Edward Shils' comment concerning the relationship of the rising new discipline of Sociology and science. Shils writes: "Sociology is not a science in its achievement but it has many of the features of science. In one most important respect it is scientific: it makes cumulative progress, revising and clarifying its foundations, extending its scope, unifying discrete observations into coherent patterns of observations." Shils, Edward (1961:1446) "The Calling of Sociology" in *Theories of Society: Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory*, (eds. T. Parsons, E. Shils, K. Naegle, J. Pitts) The Free Press of Glencoe, Vol. II.

Christianity is yet uncertain. No doubt, today as centuries ago, the Church provides many men with an interpretation of existence and thereby with spiritual strength for life — an apparently indispensable support for the masses, whose actual life is ruthlessly formed as well as left without purpose or inspiration by technique, economic life and the State. On the other hand, all these forces as well as the sciences act independently of and often in opposition to *Christianity* inasmuch as they seek to bind man to their particular aims and develop ways of thinking suitable to these mundane purposes. Likewise philosophy, by its unlimited search for truth and its will to freedom, stands opposed at least to Christian dogma and to the principle of authority of divine revelation inherent in it.

Equally uncertain is the future significance of *Philosophy*. What will be its fate? In earlier modern times, although realized only by individuals like Descartes, Leibniz and Kant, Bruno and Spinoza, Bacon, Locke and Hume, philosophy lent intellectual justification to the whole life of an era. Will it do the same in the future? Will it accomplish the task, attempted for instance by Jaspers, of giving to an individual resolved upon freedom a philosophical consciousness, which would enable him to conduct himself more intelligently and decisively than the unphilosophical man? And will, as

Heidegger for instance hopes, philosophy, starting from the knowledge of the structure of human existence, succeed in confronting us once more with the problem of Being? In short, will it be the task of future philosophy to interpret existence in a more universal sense and so once more give strength and significance to human life, as it did in Greece and in earlier modern times? Or will it manifest itself in a humbler, though certainly not unimportant manner, through the minute investigation of specialised problems propounded by isolated schools? That is the question which, in the future, must be decided for philosophy.

PHILOSOPHY AND “DISORGANIZED KNOWLEDGE:” AN UNCONVENTIONAL INTERPRETATION

Philosophy, when understood as a new kind of “ordering of knowledge,” in the mental activity of philosophers often destabilizes the person. Disruptions in philosophical thinking often cause disruptions in other disciplines and practical areas of one’s life. This is so since philosophy, when not considered as a classical discipline with its inherent structure of formal principles, can be used to seek, not “order,” but used to identify “dis-order” in a posthuman context. Identifying dis-order is not a negative intellectual activity since dis-order is not to be equated with chaos as some uncritical philosophers may be inclined to understand it. Rather, I suggest that dis-order is simply a novel way to understand diversity in a posthuman context. That is to say, not to understand philosophy in a classical way.

I philosophize in this book outside the conventional approach that accepts philosophy as a discipline and as having a place within the family of academic disciplines ordered according to the Western classical tradition. Contemporary philosophizing is a mental activity undertaken within one’s culture that supplies its proper norms according to a classical Western legacy.⁴ It is this classical thinking

⁴ Herman Hausheer observes that Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) “explained human history as a consequence of the nature of man and of man’s physical environment. Held implicitly to the view that society is basically an organic whole. Accounted for the differences in culture and institutions of different peoples as being due to geographical conditions. Although history is a process of the education of the human species, it has no

within Western culture that tends to lead to a type of formalization of thinking characteristic of institutions. Classical hierarchical institutions establish order as influenced by the ancient Hellenic philosophers. This has not been the case of institutions arising within modernity which construct the norms of philosophical interpretation out of the modern, not classical, experience. This is not to gainsay the antecedent intellectual developments of modern philosophy that has supplied, to some degree, insights for Western unconventional thought to develop.

In the West, philosophers turned from a perspective of interpretation during the latter 19th and earlier 20th centuries that was highly objective to a more subjective philosophy. This turn to subjectivity encouraged philosophers to focus on the traditions of the Orient and Middle East. But not philosophers only. Historians, linguists, archaeologists and students of comparative religion also explored the mind of the Orient and Middle East at this time. Collectively, these disciplines engaged in a new understanding of interpretive studies with each bound to its own inherent methodology. I suggest that at the same time philosophy became an exception to the rule of inherent methodology. Philosophers began thinking outside the inherited methodology of the Western tradition. As a result, the specialized concerns of the West were not the only *foci* of

definite goal of perfection and development.” *Dictionary of Philosophy: Ancient, Medieval, Modern* (1963) s. v. Herder, Johann Gottfried (ed. Dagobert Runes).

philosophers. These multiple *foci* made it difficult for a specialized purpose of philosophy to be conceived independently of other academic disciplines. The philosopher's thinking was no longer restricted to the inherited object of classical philosophy, i.e., *esse* or being, but became focused on the philosopher's selection from the diverse human disciplines in need of philosophical study. This approach, of course, was recognized as being in conformity with the pattern of human evolution which disclosed diverse goals and purposes within human experience. With no inherent goal or purpose or required organization or order in their thinking from an evolutionary perspective, philosophers were able to focus on the disorder of thought or variety in their way of thinking. That is to say, but to recognize a unity within diverse human experience became the focus of philosophers not to focus on a union with ultimate reality.

Unconventional philosophers are unlike classical philosophers who tend towards a goal of union. Unconventional philosophers tend to a goal of diversity in that their thinking is undertaken within the currents of complex intellectual thought of Modernity and Postmodernity. This trend has been recognized since the rise of Western universities staffed by professional philosophers. Today these are philosophers recognized as being "open" in their thinking. Such "open" thinking has no boundaries of its own, but is regulated only by the boundaries of its object of attention. Culture constitutes

a major *locus* for public philosophers. Culture is not constituted by one organizing principle, but rather by a collection of dis-organizing principles. However, there is a *continuum* or unity of continuity within the human experience of diverse cultures that warrants retaining, with modified understanding, the contributions of order by classical philosophers to the unconventional dis-order of contemporary philosophical thought.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE SCOPE OF PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy is a cumulus investigation of human experience and therefore it is not scientific. The fundamental problems of philosophy are older than science and are not easily subjected to the analytic methodology of Western science. To take part in philosophical thinking today is to recognize other people's thoughts which involves an anticipation of future relationships and my "inner rehearsal" of these relationships. That is, will I agree or disagree with them. In the scope of philosophy there is also a review of the past as to what has taken place in an exchange of thought. Philosophy is a process of observation, reflection and communication of human thoughts among individuals which leads to further enlightenment. The thoughts of philosophers are intelligible and they reside in the minds of philosophers, not in the the object of philosophical thought itself.

Freedom, necessity, determination, order and choice are the type of issues debated by philosophers that divide or unite them. The legacy of Western philosophy may be documented through the relation of its major ideas and hence form a foundation for a new approach at interpreting knowledge. Philosophy is not a technique for finding answers to puzzling questions. Nor is knowledge a question of adding new ideas to an existing data base. Knowledge consists of the differences that philosophers have introduced among animate and inanimate objects that augment human knowledge. This is one reason why only humans write literature, science and theology.

Save for the human being itself, all other beings do not speak for themselves philosophically. They simply respond in their role of actor in the agent/actor relationship. In such a relationship, different philosophies arise within human cultures and in light of a contemporary understanding of cultural evolution these philosophies undergo a continuous revision and improvement given the philosopher's experience and subsequent conceptualizations.

Being persons, philosophers experience, that is perceive and conceive of two worlds, as it were. The "world" within and the "world" without when seeking knowledge and clarification of ideas. But these worlds of perception and conception are combined in the individual person and do not reach into the universe as a whole of which human experience is only a part. Thus, perception and

conception produce a set of images of order (if one is a classical philosopher) or dis-order (if one is a non-classical philosopher) to express particular perspectives of the human experience.

Philosophers undertake to understand the whole range of human experience individually and collectively. Their art is the only *holistically proper study of human kind* since it is not as narrow as any scientific methodology, be they the technological or social sciences. Unconventional philosophers do not construct formulations of their experience that are potentially binding on all. This is so, since philosophizing is a cumulus approach to learning which, of necessity, is not required to build on preceding or antecedent ideas. Although, in short, philosophy is not a linear mental activity some historians are wont to study it in that fashion, i.e., ancient, medieval, modern and postmodern. Thus, philosophical thought is always uneven in its expression, accepting what is adequate to the moment and rejecting what is inadequate to the moment, and thus appearing as comparative intellectual phenomena in various human cultures. Philosophers are required to think between their birth and death, but their philosophizing is at different evolutionary stages within their lives. These stages are often easy to recognize, but difficult to interpret. This is so since the evolution of philosophical consciousness generates, in its initial stage, a differentiation of a “me” and a “not-me” in personal relationships.

Among the phenomena philosophers must interpret are beliefs and moral commitments. A philosopher is able to transcend the beliefs and moral intentions of other humans. Some see an order in human beliefs and intentions, whereas others see dis-order in these same human beliefs and intentions. Dis-order is not a negative concept in itself, but a concept of divergence arising from the experience of common sense. Common sense perceives the movement of sunrises and sunsets. This is a dis-ordered perception. The ordered, but not perceived, movement is that the viewer moves about the sun resulting in an optical illusion from the perspective of common sense.

Philosophical questions usually address previous answers arising within different cultural traditions. Posthuman philosophical questions will be addressing the new experience of humanity in uncharted waters. In short, philosophical questions are not posed in a vacuum. Science follows the same pattern. Its questions do not arise in a vacuum but from experience. Answers composed today will not satisfy the questions of tomorrow. And, although philosophers today and in the future may pose the same questions as in the past, they most likely will arrive at different answers than in the past. Philosophy, as a mental activity, is not an *a priori* given and ironically philosophers must fabricate a philosophical schema or discipline before they can know what they are, in fact, doing. That is, they must speculate what philosophy might be before they can

identify it. In this view the name follows the activity. Philosophy is identified by the questions the philosophers ask and the answer they accept. Some philosophers accept provisional answers while others accept only dogmatic answers that are not subject to revision. For phenomenologists, questions and answers are formulated from an emphasis on the interpretation of the observed facts of experience. For analytical philosophers, however, emphasis is put on the observed facts of experience with little or no accounting for the perspective of the observer.

The philosophical traditions that have preceded unconventional interpretation will most likely continue since the philosophical environment is not co-extensive with one person and is of unequal composition. Therefore, I argue that unconventional interpretation is dis-organized, but legitimate. This dis-organized interpretation offers different philosophers different challenges in either seeking a unity to experience, or assigning an order to experience. A third option open to philosophers is to seek a deeper meaning and clarification of the *status quo* of their interpretive thought. To be noted, however, is that all these challenges are inter-related as philosophers chart a course for self-differentiation vis-à-vis their world of experience. It is the activity of self-differentiation from a familiar world thought that causes the anxiety and destabilization of philosophers.

Philosophical questions have beginnings and ends and they endure through time. Thus, they have boundaries of which the philosopher is conscious and is required to manage if truth is to be recognized. Such philosophical management of boundaries is an exercise between inner thoughts and the exterior written or spoken formulation of those thoughts. Speech and the written formulation of thought allow the philosopher's concepts to be understood by others. Unlike speech, however, printed matter, even electronically stored information, which can later be retrieved has a tangibility about it that, once it has been crafted it remains in place to be read, for quite some time. Speech, on the other hand, relies on the intangible memory of the hearer for accurate understanding of what was said. With this distinction between spoken and written management of boundaries, philosophers have something to say but not everything to say.

Some uncritical philosophers and others who seem to have no appreciation of history, still seriously but falsely advance the notion that *explicit disagreement conceals implicit consensus*. Or, as many Americans still idealistically continue to believe, we can still disagree, but yet cooperate. In light of my experience this is less than accurate in practice and amounts to an error in philosophical interpretation. That is to say that cooperation or consensus need not be presumed in philosophical speculation. Philosophers remain diverse in their aims and objectives. Since it is impossible from a

philosophical perspective to study everything at once, the philosopher must select a relevant objective phenomenon present to consciousness for study to the temporary exclusion of other phenomena. Such selection is goal-directed and often motivated by anthropological concerns. These anthropological concerns involve the interaction of human individuals, currently understood from a classical perspective in the West, and also from an emerging posthuman philosophical perspective. However, this latter understanding is barely in its infancy given its philosophical exploration within academia. But the posthuman reality cannot be ignored.

Philosophy is a way of thinking about one's experience with an open attitude given the input from one's environment. One's environment consists of his or her culture, the objective factor, and his or her personality, the subjective factor. The former involves the input into one's experience of inherited data known as "actors." Some actors are values and norms of behaviour and religious convictions. These are reflected upon by the philosopher as "agent" within a given environment and subsequently re-enter that environment as new data. Hence, change in one's attitude is likely unavoidable since one makes up part of the environment in which he or she lives. In this context culture provides the shared objective criteria for proper behaviour, and the the personal agent determines the meaning of the human activity. Thus, a change in the culture will result in a change

in the personal behaviour of the agent and vice versa. This awareness, in fact, opens up the possibility of humans directing their own evolution. For the less emotionally secure this raises their anxiety level, and in some cases beyond their ability to successfully cope with new insights, especially in religious affairs when new religious values cannot be successfully institutionalized within an envisioned cultural context. Humans living in a posthuman context may not initially know what kind of personal relationships within their changed cultural situation they want or, in fact, can achieve. In order to explain and clarify their understanding, philosophers must think in terms of a dynamic. Their thinking cannot remain static, otherwise it would be but a form of dogmatism. Thus, to avoid dogmatism, I suggest that a phenomenological philosophy is best suited to direct philosophical speculation in intellectual disciplines.

Recent developments, in terms of history, in Biblical Studies are three and consist of literary criticism in the form of 1) investigating the composition of the text, 2) the motives of the sender and 3) the subsequent understanding of the receiver. These three perspectives were not considered philosophically in the pre-modern Christian tradition, but rather were undertaken theologically. A contemporary presentation of theological interpretation from the Roman Catholic perspective is Edward Schillebeeckx's *Revelation and Theology*.⁵ Anton Vögtle, in addition, identifies an intellectual activity known

⁵ Schillebeeckx, E. (1979) *Revelation and Theology* Sheed and Ward.

as the “hermeneutical circle,” and suggests that a philosophical interpretation be “built up from the clearer and more easily intelligible statements, and this result [be] used in turn to throw light on what is uncertain and difficult. This process may be used with regard to individual writings, groups of writings and for the Bible as a whole.”⁶ Following the next section, “Philosophical Speculation in Light of a Posthuman Future,” I propose an initiative in interpreting Biblical Studies in light of the contemporary and unconventional philosophical perspective presented above.

PHILOSOPHICAL SPECULATIONS IN LIGHT OF A POSTHUMAN FUTURE

Theology and Social Structure

Some philosophers, but more likely sociologists, are of the opinion that religion cannot form a stable component of experience in human affairs. Some might go so far as to suggest that eventually science will replace religion in the experience of some human beings. I suggest that a perceived lack of stability in religious experience does not suggest the latter, either individually or collectively. Rather, the lack of stability in human religious experience understood as a dynamic characteristic raises the question of the place of religion in the process of social evolution. The question may be answered objectively or subjectively, depending upon the personal

⁶ Vögtle, Anton (1986:114) s v Bible in *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi* (ed. Karl Rahner).

commitment of the observer to the religious phenomenon under consideration. Those with a distant commitment to religion will be more objective, than those with a closer commitment who will be more subjective in their interpretation. Historically, this is typical of any human behaviour.

From a classical perspective, religion and government are historically fused in human experience, such that to speak of one implies the presence of the other to some degree and in some form. The distinction between church and sect is significant in Western society in that the former has its roots both in the philosophy of ancient Greece and the in the cultural experience of the ancient Semites who possessed no particular culture of their own. Ultimately, it was the philosophical component of a church's teaching that allowed the phenomenon of a Council such as Vatican II to take place, whereas the teaching of the sects lacked any such component by which to centralize their beliefs. Common to both, however, was the connection in human experience of the church and sect and the values each contributed to society in the form of a collective conscience. The church through philosophy and the sect through common sense within the human experience of Western civilization.

On Theology

It belongs to the human being to speculate about itself and its environment both animate and inanimate. As humanity enters a

posthuman stage in its evolution we are likely to see increased interest in the fusion of the human being as living, and material being as non-living components in one entity. As a philosopher I reject any conception of inanimate matter as living a life analogously to our own and I attribute to inanimate matter no possibility of being divine, symbolically, mythologically, philosophically or otherwise. In principle, since I do not know for certain, I hold that to be conscious the human organism must always be alive. Further, I hold that other animal organisms are alive and consciousness but lack the unique capacity of being conscious as a human being. I rule out plant life completely as being conscious. In short, human consciousness is that which specifies the human being. Thus, I distinguish the act or activity of consciousness from the content of consciousness. In the act of being conscious a certain degree of speculative activity takes place concerning the contents of consciousness. So also does a certain degree of existential activity take place concerning the content of consciousness.

Primitive humanity associated movement with life and thus from this observation projected human qualities, including mental qualities, on objects that moved, failing to understand that movement was not necessarily indicative of life. Hence the erroneous attribution to inanimate objects a consciousness and theology in its most primitive manifestation. Philosophically, it is easy to understand how this evolved into the creation of supernatural agents, or agent. In short, primitive humans unwittingly transferred

the beginnings of an explanation of their awareness of their own phenomena to external sources by creating gods since they had no other explanation. From a primitive religious perspective, one may envision a priesthood with speculative powers arising from a heathen understanding of invisible gods, somewhat separated from material things. Primitive priests were required to rule, manage, and interpret the presence of the invisible heathen gods. Pagans, on the other hand, required no such functionary. Each individual god resided in a determined manner in a particular object with no extension of power ruling over other objects. Each individual pagan exercised his or her own priesthood in relationship to the gods that were constantly present. At this stage of human evolution, affective knowledge trumped intellectual knowledge leaving humans with an unsatisfactory form of knowledge to interpret their all their experience.

Intellectual, or philosophical, knowledge will eventually begin to triumph and take on the function of directing human speculation at the expense of affective knowledge. The interpretive mistake that will be made, as I see it from a contemporary perspective, is that affective and intellectual knowledge will be laced in competition with each other, instead of cooperating with each other. At a later stage evolutionary understanding will suggest that a “both/and” interpretation is more suitable to human advancement than an “either/or” interpretation. Primitive theological interpretation, through evolutionary human intellectual activity, is the parent of an

empirical scientific interpretation. That is to say, a proper theological and scientific cooperative effort, rather than a religious and scientific competitive effort, better describes human society and distinct from inhuman society. Both forms of knowledge, theological and scientific, are human inventions and I suggest that if either is brought to negate that which is divine, human knowledge is in error. In short, from a philosophical perspective, for there to be no divinity, there needs to be no human knowledge as well since humanity invented its divinity out of necessity. The “coin” of divinity needs both faces to be of value. Erase one and the “coin” has no value, but becomes a mere medallion of social and historical significance which is no true reflection of human society. In light of the foregoing, I do not agree with Auguste Comte, who in 1896 wrote from a sociological point of view that “the expansion of the spirit of observation ... must destroy the balance which, at length, can not be maintained at all but by some modification of the original philosophy,” by which he meant that scientific revolution arises out of discordance between facts and principles.⁷

Most contemporary Western philosophers contemplating what posthumanity might be like begin with the legacy of Greece and Rome. This is necessary, I suggest, but it is likely that the legacy of the philosophical contemplations of Greece and Rome will not successfully be imported into a posthuman context. That is because

⁷ Cf *Theories of Society: Foundations of Modern Sociological Theory* (1961:654) Parsons, T; Shils, E; Naegle, K; Pitts, R (editors) Free Press of Glencoe.

classical humanity is not posthumanity from a philosophical perspective and posthumans do not think and experience life as the ancients did due to the great techno-digital advances in science and a subsequent change in philosophical understanding. These techno-digital advances are but the evolutionary development that has its roots in an earlier age than Greece and Rome. In short, “known” theology has an “unknown” origin subject only to human speculation, not metaphysical certainty. But theology cannot live or develop on mere memory of the past. Theology must live in the present and retain all the necessary advances obtained through evolution to live successfully in a posthuman context. Not classical theology, but “sect” theology will most likely be successfully imported into the posthuman world of human experience. Classical theology will also be imported but less relevantly so in meeting the needs of posthuman experience which will be greatly diversified and independent of a unified philosophical perspective. The union of classical experience will not easily conquer, if ever, the diversity of posthuman experience. Sect theology, as I see it, will not attempt to educate the masses in a posthuman context, thus presenting a sharp contrast to the imported classical theology which will no doubt retain this task which is philosophically inherent in its constitution. In short, sect theology does not live on its past philosophy but on the renewed philosophy of the human intellect and the subjective reality of the individual mastery of life. Thus, sect theology is more appropriate for posthuman humanity that attempts to raise itself

above the classical concept it has inherited and be saved from the evil limitations of the past under whatever form they may be conceived. But one may speculatively wonder, since sect theology is only one part of the human constitution, can it confer power on humanity that is superior to the collective powers inherent the posthuman being?

PART TWO

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION NEEDS
PHILOSOPHY

A BRIEF UNCONVENTIONAL HERMENEUTIC

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INTRODUCTION

The following essay assesses the tools of biblical scholarship from the perspective of a non-traditional and unconventional philosophy. Clearly the tools of modern critical biblical scholarship have been developed by scholars without the aid of classical Western philosophy. However, scripture has often been understood in terms of a classical and traditional philosophy and thus has often been found wanting in present day interpretation by certain scholars and by the faithful. Alternatively, a phenomenological philosophical interpretation, of the type inspired by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), may broaden the present-day scholar's vision of the original intent of the author or authors of the biblical books as well as their current understanding by the believer. But it must be noted that no philosopher can attribute a universal meaning to scriptural interpretation. In this treatment I make no distinction between the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, from a philosophical point of view, in examining the tools of biblical interpretation.

A philosophical examination of the tools of biblical interpretation is not to be confused with biblical theology which is a discipline in its own right. Pre-critical biblical interpretation was dogmatic and theological in its interpretation. Philosophy played a minor role in interpretation. However, beginning in the mid-seventeenth century new philosophical trends no longer considered an external God as revealing absolute metaphysical truths. Rather, some sort of

immanentism, including God's presence, as well as scientific knowledge replaced "revealed" knowledge. Thus, it may be argued that philosophical issues were introduced into the background of biblical understanding. In today's advanced evolutionary context, philosophy and the critical biblical sciences are, in fact, partners in biblical interpretation.

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION: PRE-VATICAN II

The passages presented in this section were written by a professor of philosophy and liturgy towards the end of the 19th century and were printed in a Catholic version of the bible as “An Introduction to the Proper Reading of the Sacred Book.”⁸ These passages give an indication of the philosophical attitude of a new and evolving understanding of the critical scholars of biblical interpretation that was gaining ground in the Church. I review and comment on these passages which ultimately will lead to a revised philosophical interpretation within biblical studies in the context of contemporary Catholic teaching. This brief section describes a change in the philosophical attitude in the Church from a literal pre-Vatican II understanding to a critical Post-Vatican II understanding.

An Introduction to the Proper Reading of the Sacred Book

What more useful work, then, can be undertaken both for God's glory, for the spread of the true Church, and for the edification of the faithful, than following the instructions of the Church herself to do all in one's power to make easy of access and profitable to the soul, this Word of God which in His mercy and goodness He has wished should be preserved for our Benefit? (p. 3)

These words by Reverend I. F. Horstmann, D.D., Professor of Philosophy and Liturgy, Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, Philadelphia, PA., set the point of departure for contemporary

⁸ *The Holy Bible* (Vulgate Edition), The Henry Bill Publishing Company, Norwich, Connecticut, 1875.

biblical studies.⁹ Note that the initiative for the work of biblical studies comes from within the Church at God's bidding. Within Roman Catholic tradition all things, including philosophy, are meant for the greater glory of God, which is particularly evident in Christian Pre-Vatican II thinking. Today, critical philosophers ask, does this attitude continue to hold the attention of serious thinkers in a secular context? Thus, Horstmann's words beg the question: has there been a detectible change in the Catholic philosophical perspective and, if so, to what degree has this change altered the interpretation of the Word of God, as expressed in the sacred books, for the benefit of the contemporary faithful? Horstmann continued:

The Fathers of the Church called these books "holy" and "divine," and frequently say that God Himself is "their Author" (p. 4) [emphasis in the original].

The Fathers of the Church notwithstanding, a quick review of the historical development of philosophical thinking will show that the critical philosophers of today tend not to apply the notions of holiness and divinity to physical objects.¹⁰ God alone is holy. However, the authorship of the bible is a different matter than that

⁹ The Fathers of Vatican II will consider Horstmann's perspective as theology, not philosophy. (Cf. *Dei Verbum*, paragraph 24.)

¹⁰ According to Heinrich Gomperz the Fathers of the Church engaged in patristic philosophy. "In general, patristic philosophy is differentiated from medieval and modern philosophies in that it failed to distinguish adequately between the conclusions of reason and the facts of revelation. Philosophy, theology and the truths of religion made one amorphous body of truth. *Dictionary of Philosophy: Ancient, Medieval, Modern* (1963) s. v. Patristic Philosophy (ed. Dagobert Runes).

of the patristic philosophers to the minds of many critical philosophers today. Much work has been undertaken in this area since the scientific interest in Biblical Studies became popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

*In what relation does the Church stand to Scripture? [Horstman asks.] ... Historically, it is certain that in point of time the Church precedes the Scriptures. She was in existence, established and perfect, possessing full and complete authority, before there ever was any question of the scriptures. ... Our divine Master appears. He preaches. He commands His disciples to **preach** throughout the whole world (Matt. 28:19-20), but He writes nothing Himself, neither does He command anyone else to write. ... Even as regards the New Testament, we know from St. Irenaeus ¹¹ that at the end of the second century there were still many churches that believed all the doctrines of the Apostles without ever having received the Word of God communicated to them in written form. "If the Apostles," he says, "had not left any writings, would it not have been our duty to be guided by the rule of that tradition which they delivered to those to whom they entrusted the churches? — a rule asserted by many barbarous nations believing in Christ who, not possessing any written language, have the words of salvation written without paper and ink in their hearts by the Spirit and carefully preserve the ancient doctrines delivered to them." Adv.Haeres, 1, iii., c. 4. (p. 5-6) [emphasis in the original].*

Clearly the contents of a canonical text for philosophical contemplation cannot be considered to contain the total mind of the Church. The contents of the text are but part of what the Church believes. The other part is contained in the Church's traditional oral

¹¹ Lived during the first half of the 2nd Century but the exact dates are disputed by scholars.

beliefs. Insofar as the Church is perfect, that is, lacks nothing for its fulfilment, religious philosophers cannot hold that there is more to come that currently exists outside either scripture or tradition. That is, there is no new revelation, only developments of previously revealed truth. Thus, any decisions, of themselves, by philosophers concerning the texts will only be partial in their significance for contemporary biblical interpretation. This also means that the tools of the scientific disciplines used in biblical study to provide a new perspective for critical philosophical interpretation will only be partially enlightening for the philosopher. It follows, however, that the philosophical appreciation and usefulness of these tools will enlarge the understanding and increase the accuracy of biblical understanding. It is not that there is any new revelation in the church, but rather there is a new interpretation of the Church's revelation that closed with the death of the last apostle. According to Gregory Baum's interpretation: "Divine revelation is closed with the apostolic witness to Christ, in the sense that God has totally revealed himself in Christ and that, after Christ, no further self-revelation of God is possible."¹² Horstmann continues:

But beyond those regions in which Greek was known, St Thomas preached the Gospel to the Indians, St Bartholomew to the Parthians, St Thaddeus in Mesopotamia, other Apostles in Spain, yet antiquity has not handed down to us an Indian or a Scythian translation or an African text of the Scriptures. We know of only two

¹² Baum, Gregory (1968:150) *The Credibility of the Church Today: A Reply to Charles Davis Herder & Herder*, [The book bears an *imprimatur* and *nihil obstat*].

ancient translations of the original text of the New Testament, the ancient Latin Vulgate, made toward the end of the first or the beginning of the second century, and the Syriac (p. 7).

Were there written texts from the apostles in ancient times that are no longer extant in these countries? If so, why are they not preserved? Were they not considered necessary and subsequently fell into disuse? Perhaps they were destroyed through the course of natural disasters not recorded in history. Biblical criticism is beginning to shed new light on the answers previously given to these questions.¹³ From a philosophical point of view scholars will never know for certain. Written texts are not universally standardized or universalized as they are composed. They are contextual and culturally relevant to the time of their author. There is recorded evidence that this insight of contextual and cultural contingency was, in fact, not known to the pre-Vatican II philosophers of scripture. Thus, contemporary criticism of Indian and Mesopotamian Christian texts could potentially reveal different understandings in light of current biblical studies, but no new revelation. The Professor continues:

These reasons and facts show conclusively, that the Church and the Gospel of Jesus Christ do not rest upon the written word of the New Testament as upon their foundation, as well as, that the Bible is not the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ. What we have said concerning the

¹³ Cf. United States Public Broadcasting System (PBS) *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly* "Ancient Christians in India" April 24, 2009. Link: <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2009/04/24/april-24-2009-ancient-christians-in-india/2754/>.

Church and its existence before the Scripture we can say also of each member of the Church. If a man have but faith in the Church of Christ and receive her baptism, he is a Christian in any country of the world, whether he know how to read or not, whether he be acquainted with the existence of the inspired books or be ignorant of it. In the early days of the Church the law of secrecy required that the most sublime mysteries of Christianity, such as the eucharist, should be known to the initiated only — that is to say, to Christians thoroughly confirmed and proven in the faith. “Many hermits,” says St. Augustine, “lived in the desert, having with them faith, hope and charity, but without the sacred books.” It is clear, therefore, that the Church flourished and brought forth fruit before the scriptures of the New Testament existed (p. 7).

Some contemporary philosophers and theologians among the faithful might speculate about what is the minimum of scriptural knowledge required for membership in the Church. Clearly, knowledge obtained from the scripture was not a necessary requirement for membership in the ancient church if Horstmann’s understanding is to be accepted. All the more reason in an age of an “information explosion” for a philosophical appreciation of the tools of critical biblical interpretation. Given the previous understanding of classical philosophy in biblical interpretation, although inadequate for present day use, contemporary philosophers can carry on the work of the Church and bring forth a clearer and deeper understanding of the relationship between the believing community’s oral tradition and its scriptures from a critical philosophical investigation. As evidence of the Church’s flourishing, Horstmann notes that:

The New Testament bears on its face the evidence that it was addressed to men who already believed and were already instructed—partially at least—in the truths it teaches or enforces, and that it was not written to teach the faith to such as had no knowledge of it, but to correct errors, to present more fully the faith on certain points. No one can read it without perceiving that it neither is, nor professes to be, the original medium of the Christian revelation, but from first to last supposes a revelation previously made, the true religion to have been already taught and instructions in it already received. From these facts it follows that a knowledge of the inspired writings is not necessary to salvation, and furthermore, that the Church approves herself to men as a Divine authority, independently of the Holy Scriptures (p. 7).

Scripture as a catechetical correction is not necessary for salvation, but intended to present the faith more accurately in the understanding of the faithful. Given the phenomenon of fundamentalism in contemporary religious belief (including Jewish, Christian and Islamic) this truth seems to have been lost to many theologians and religious philosophers. In light of the tools available to current biblical studies, their use appears to confirm that salvation is not dependent on any intellectual or academic understanding, including philosophy, but salvation is dependent upon faith in God as revealed in Jesus of Nazareth. Jewish philosophy lacks an understanding of salvation in the Christian sense. According to Meyer Waxmann “Divine providence is admitted by all Jewish philosophers, but its extent is a matter of dispute. ... The origin, nature, and the continued existence or immortality of the soul is

widely discussed in Jewish philosophy.”¹⁴ Arabic philosophy, likewise suggests no salvation, but as Rudolf Allers notes, “the importance of Arab philosophy has to be evaluated both in regard to the Oriental and Western world. The latter was influenced, naturally, not by the originals but by the translations which do not always render exactly the spirit of the authors. In the East, theology remained victorious, but incorporated in its own teachings much of the philosophies it condemned.”¹⁵ Neither philosophy nor theology in the Christian sense is of divine origin and neither, properly understood, poses any threat to the faith. Philosophy and theology, like the disciplines of biblical criticism, are intellectual products of the human mind and do not possess divine authority. To many contemporary faithful, misconceiving that divine authority supports theology and philosophy is a potential source of great anxiety to fundamental interpreters of the faith. Horstmann’s remedy for such anxiety resides in the Church.

As the Church existed before the Scriptures; as the Church established the authenticity and Divine inspiration of the same, so also is it certain that it has always belonged to the Church, and to her alone, to give that authoritative interpretation of the Scriptures which in matters of faith and morals ought to determine their meaning with supreme authority obligatory on all (p. 9).

¹⁴ *Dictionary of Philosophy: Ancient, Medieval, Modern* (1963) s. v. Jewish Philosophy (ed. Dagobert Runes).

¹⁵ *Dictionary of Philosophy: Ancient, Medieval, Modern* (1963) s. v. Arabic Philosophy (ed. Dagobert Runes).

In the mind of the ancient Church, even prior to the scriptures, Councils interpreted revelation authoritatively.¹⁶ However, in time, theologians and philosophers became interpreters of the scriptures, but not authoritative interpreters. They are interpreting a product not of their own conception. Christian philosophers, as individual members of the Church, do not determine the norms of faith and morals but only interpret and clarify them for the faithful. In Horstmann's view:

Scripture, then, needs interpretation. It is with this written law as with all others. Whilst they remain superior to the individuals whom they designate as their interpreters, the Scriptures need to have their exact meaning, the extent of their application, their exceptions, etc., determined according to necessity by a counsel of state which lives, speaks, explains its decisions and can ensure obedience. Now, at all times and everywhere, the Church has claimed the right of interpreting the Scriptures with supreme authority through her chief pastors, but principally through her Head (p. 10).

In this passage two points need clarification in light of contemporary understanding. Critical philosophers are likely to question the remark that the scriptures “remain superior to the individuals whom they designate as their interpreters.” Contemporary biblical scholarship gives no indication of undertaking such a view. These biblical scholars make no claim to know more than the scripture discloses, but they do claim to know more about how the scriptures came to be written and how they are to be interpreted in the

¹⁶ Cf. Council of Jerusalem (circa 50). Acts 15:1-5.

contemporary context. Also, “a council of state” is not to be understood in any sense of territorial state politics. But rather, is intended to be understood in the sense of being a function of one of the three orders of the realm of French government in the 18th Century, i.e., the clergy, the nobility and the commons. Thus, it is to be understood as a council of the estate of the clergy. The theologians of Vatican II will give a new and expanded significance to this “estate of the clergy” notion which will introduce the new concept of the People of God, i.e., the *sensus fidelium*, in constituting the Church, and in interpreting its traditions and scriptures. Confirming no new revelations for interpretation, Horstmann continues:

For as Christ does not favor His Church with new revelations, the teaching she must impart to the world can have no other subject-matter than the utterances of the Incarnate Word — utterances consigned to and preserved in Scripture and Tradition. Her whole office, therefore, is to tell us what this divine doctrine is, and to verify and establish its true sense (p. 11).

The word of God, not the traditions or texts in which it is expressed, is the proper object or subject-matter of theological study. These traditions and texts can be also studied from a philosophical point of view incorporating the recent disciplines of the social sciences. Philosophers and social scientists are legitimate interpreters of the texts and traditions of the Church that contain the word of God. It may be argued that philosophers are specialized assistants to

theologians and social scientists on behalf of the faithful. As shall be seen, this role of specialized assistants will become more developed in the post-Vatican II era of biblical interpretation.

BIBLICAL CRITICISM: POST-VATICAN II

The passages below are taken from “Church Pronouncements” in Volume II of *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* ¹⁷ which give a sampling of the philosophical attitude of the Church following the decrees of the Pontifical Biblical Commission originally founded by Pope Leo XIII with the apostolic letter, *Vigilantiae Studii* in 1902. Clearly, with the publication of this apostolic letter the rise of interest in biblical studies by the social scientist becomes evident. As noted above by Horstmann “fundamentalism” is an impediment to literary interpretation in the contemporary context.

A fundamentalism in interpreting [the Pontifical Commission’s Decrees] is just as objectionable as a fundamentalism in interpreting Scripture (p. 625).

In interpreting either the church’s documents or the scriptures one must guard against a fundamentalist attitude which is closed to development even when human experience suggests otherwise. To consciously guard against a fundamentalist attitude represents a significant advancement in the mind of the post-Vatican II theologians and philosophers from earlier times. The experience of many contemporary philosophers is that a phenomenological philosophy is more suited to guard against fundamentalism than a classical philosophy. The former is more adept at articulating the

¹⁷ Volumes I & II, Prentice Hall, New Jersey (1968:624).

options of interpretation given the believer's experience in today's world than the latter.

[From 1870 to 1900], the fact that some non-Catholics were being led by their biblical studies to devalue the religious import of the Scriptures created a certain defensiveness on the part of the Church authorities, ever anxious to preserve the Scriptures as God's word. ... Nevertheless, [Pope Leo XIII] showed himself aware of the advantages of scientific linguistic and exegetical studies, and he was attuned to the fact that the views of the biblical authors in questions of science were not invested with scriptural infallibility. Thus, at the turn of the century the official Catholic attitude toward scriptural advances was one of caution but also of dawning appreciation that boded well for the future (p. 625).

The attitudes of theologians and philosophers change slowly as ideas evolve. New methods of inquiry and interpretation are often feared at first and not all thinkers are open to intellectual challenges arising in light of future interpretation. The fact is, within the evolutionary process of ideas, theologians and philosophers interpreting scripture must be either custodians of the past or architects of the future. But this evolutionary development of ideas is not to be understood only successively, but also in a cumulus manner. A moment of reflection upon one's experience will reveal that this is the case, i.e., that both successive and cumulus development exist simultaneously in contemporary human experience. In successive development one idea replaces another. In cumulus development one idea accompanies another. In the former

context it is a case of “either/or,” whereas in the latter context it is a case of “both/and.”

The encyclical “Divino Afflante Spiritu” of 1943 was a Maga Charta for biblical progress. Although the Pope saluted the encyclicals of his predecessors, he announced that the time for fear was over and that Catholic scholars should use modern tools in their exegesis (p. 625).

The removal of external constraints on the process of individual intellectual progress does not necessarily remove the experience of fear and anxiety. It is known to be the case that once external constraints are gone, and philosophers explore new realms of ideas, an increase in personal anxiety frequently accompanies the liberating process. Initially, as many psychotherapists will attest, such anxiety is not automatically offset by the acceptance of the modern tools of intellectual freedom. However, such anxiety is no cause to abstain from the use of modern interpretive tools in biblical exegesis.

To judge Catholic biblical scholarship today from the tenor of documents issued in the Modernist crisis is simply unjust. It is understandable that non-Catholics, while they may rejoice at the freedom now possessed by Catholic biblical scholars, may also wonder whether such scholarship can have enduring freedom since it must be guided by orientation from Rome, an orientation that may once again change (p. 626).

Scholarship is contextual and philosophers are scholars of ordered thought; they do not merely engage in common sense. Theologians and philosophers, committed to a particular historical and interpretive perspective, are always in danger of being censured by conservative authority in some fashion as was the case in the example of the “Modernist Crisis” in the Church. Such conservative censorship continues to be somewhat evident in the academic discipline of biblical interpretation, but on this occasion, from traditional groups within the laity and magisterium of the Church. In this regard philosophers and theologians do not have an absolute freedom to think as they please. But they must think contingently of something, or focus on some object, determined by and selected from their existential experience, in this case biblical studies. Their thinking is not theoretical, as in the classical perspective, but practical. As a rule, a change in the experience requires a change in interpretation, and a change in interpretation results in a change of experience. Thus, philosophers and theologians have the opportunity to order and clarify their thoughts and interpret their experience in a manner not previously possible. It is within this perspective of dialogue and phenomenological philosophy that philosophers and theologians are best protected from unwarranted censure from Rome in matters of faith and morals.

Philosophy and Contemporary Biblical Criticism

My observation is that in one way or another many contemporary

philosophers, mostly of the continental tradition, are researching into the relationship between philosophy and scripture. Scripture, having been written before existential philosophy was known, was not subject to such a critical perspective by its authors in the composition of the texts. By the Scriptures I mean the Christian or Jewish scriptures. But I suggest that, *inter alia*, my comments can be taken to apply to other monotheistic and non-monotheistic traditions of other sacred texts. This is so since all scriptural traditions can, in fact, be a focus for philosophical thinking, not only on the texts themselves, but also on the tools that are employed for general literary criticism. Through literary criticism an opportunity can be afforded for philosophers to explore various interpretive perspectives that could never have been considered in pre-critical literary times. In this way philosophers can be true to their vocation in seeking clarity in contemporary understanding. The fabrication of contemporary critical philosophical tools implies that the scriptures, like any literary record, are worthy of philosophical attention. Such attention will reveal a rich and evolving subject matter and will subsequently deepen the understanding of both philosophy and biblical studies.

PHILOSOPHICAL HERMENEUTICS ¹⁸

Scholars and ordinary people alike are searching for new insights and are turning to the new forms of interpretation to supply them. Literary, historical, philosophical, theological and biblical questions are being asked that require learned answers. But the academic disciplines of literature, history and theology cannot supply the deeper philosophical understanding to the very questions they raise. Can the philosopher then find a deeper answer in the critical tools used to answer the questions raised in biblical studies by these disciplines? To my mind the answer is “yes.” The philosopher engages in philosophical hermeneutics to interpret the infrastructure of textual criticism and of the critical social analysis employed to interpret scripture. Various biblical commentaries employ philosophical hermeneutics that incorporate either a traditional and classic, or a non-traditional and non-classical, introduction to biblical studies. In this case I refer to the phenomenological approach in the “Introduction” to *The Collegeville Bible Commentary*.¹⁹

Up to the formation of the closing of the Canon of the Christian Bible, the process of formation and collection of the books was a dynamic activity of the community of faith, and not an activity of an

¹⁸ Philosophically hermeneutics concerns the meaning of the methods of interpretation, their basic structure, scope and validity.

¹⁹ Dianne Bergant, C.S.A. and Robert J. Karris, O.F.M., (eds) *The Liturgical Press*, Collegeville, MN, 1989.

individual believer. In short, the canon was ultimately established through an historical community of faith and not of any single author. This collective effort most likely accounts for the absence of any dominant individual philosophical perspective in the establishment of the Canon.

As the bible grew in substance and complexity, the community of faith grew in substance and complexity. And as the community of faith sought stability within its life-style the focus became one of seeking to standardize the canon of belief to support that life-style as the community developed from a loose federation and fragmentation of tribes to an established nation. Philosophical hermeneutics would have developed naturally within this process. In this process of development, the exercise of authority was recognized as being located within the believing community, not with an individual prophet or author of the texts. For the contemporary believer to understand more clearly the significance of the formation of the bible, a hermeneutic on the selection of tools and methods for adequate interpretation is required. This hermeneutic must be through a philosophy whose role is to assist in clarifying the basic methods of interpretation employed in contemporary biblical scholarship. The need for assistance arises from the recognition that while the bible was formed in ancient cultures, it is interpreted in contemporary cultures whose technological advances were unknown to those ancient cultures. Proper

contemporary hermeneutics can help bridge the gap between the two cultural contexts.

From a hermeneutical perspective, I suggest that phenomenological philosophy is more adequate for contemporary biblical interpretation than classical philosophy. It is self-evident that all the differing ancient communities of faith held, more or less, to the same existential world of meaning that the authors of the biblical texts wrote about. However, there were other communities living alongside the communities of faith in the same existential world, that were highly significant especially in understanding the role of the gods or the presence of the divinity. Before the written texts appeared, their content was passed on orally from generation to generation and changes or misunderstandings were more likely to occur in the oral tradition than in the written tradition. That is to say that the pre-textual communities ultimately supplied an original fluid understanding and meaning that eventually became somewhat static when the oral tradition was committed to a textual form. Once written, the texts encouraged this static understanding for the believing community.

For the contemporary biblical interpreter then, some hermeneutical questions are: What is the message of the text? Does it lie in the text itself or in the mind of the interpreting believer, or both? Is the message objective or subjective? Does it arise from the believer's

experience of a relationship with God, or has God implanted or imported the meaning into the text for the believer to experience? In presenting an to answer such questions, I begin with the text itself.

The Text

The contemporary frame of reference in determining the meaning of texts is the 21st Century human experience of all cultures on the face of the globe. The 21st Century experience is not a unified experiential point of view or perspective. The 21st Century experience cannot be distilled into one frame of reference like certain antecedent classical frames of reference. Certain frames of reference in textual criticism which continue to exert a great influence on the interpretive understanding of the contemporary faithful are: the literal frame of reference, the allegorical frame of reference, the moral frame of reference, and the eschatological frame of reference. The 21st Century experience is all of these to some degree. The literal frame of reference refers to what the words actually convey. A fundamentalist interpretation of literal understanding actually fails to take into account the evolution of languages and cultures in which the text was written. The allegorical frame of reference, on the contrary, supplies an interpretation other than that which the literal account intends. And, in the moral, or ethical frame of reference, the text is understood in light of the existential or practical spiritual life lived in the present moment. Such understandings are often extended to and expected of a group,

or a collection of human beings within society when it acts as if it had a common mind. Finally, there is the eschatological frame of reference in which one speculates on the transcendental and spiritual interpretation of the text given future possible real alternatives. The issue here is that the eschatological frame of reference tends to minimize the significance of life in this world and focus somewhat inordinately on a presumed life after death. To these preceding frames of reference, I would add a posthuman philosophical interpretation as a frame of reference although it may not appear readily useful. In fact, any posthuman philosophical interpretation of significance has yet to be abstracted from the scientifically determined frames of reference currently in use.

The Sender

Within the process of an interpretive hermeneutics the philosopher needs to consider the message of the text in light of the original meaning intended by the author. That is to say the meaning understood by the sender encoded in the text. From a philosophical point of view, this authentic encoded meaning is not necessarily recognized, nor even retained in the evolutionary history of human understanding of the mind of the sender. Philosophical thoughts can be assigned different meanings by the sender and thus they take on an existence of their own, as it were. Classical philosophers, as history illustrates, seeking to interpret the mind of the sender, have examined a range of hermeneutic perspectives beginning with myth

and folklore, continuing with Gnosticism, pre-Socratic and Socratic philosophy, Western classical philosophy, Thomism and Neo-Thomism. To my mind, a critical hermeneutic will disclose that, in fact, a phenomenological philosophy supports the approaches taken by the social sciences in the interpretation of the scriptures. Further, a phenomenological philosophy is very likely to reveal the authentic intent of the sender.

The Receiver

From the philosopher's point of view the receiver of the textual message may be either a believing individual, a faithful community or a secular audience. The receiver may be open to receiving the message sent or closed-minded to the intent of the sender. From an historical and philosophical perspective, philosophers and theologians in interpreting ancient biblical texts are beginning to understand themselves as both a sender and receiver of messages arising from the interpretation of these texts. This understanding is significant when they interpret texts of scripture at a contingent stage in their own evolving understanding, since each new contingent stage of understanding introduces a new hermeneutic to the question of biblical composition.

CONTEMPORARY HERMENEUTICS

From a philosophical perspective, hermeneutics is the art and science of interpreting authoritative writing, especially scripture. It allows for an interpretation of what the bible means today and what the bible meant in times past. To understand what the bible meant in times past requires that one accept the words as they were intended by the original author or authors, not as they have come to be understood today. Whoever equates past and present meanings presumes and thus misunderstands that the context of meaning for the ancients is the same as the context of meaning for us today. The contemporary historical-critical method of interpretation throws light on the meaning of scripture as assigned by the ancient authors, as well as on the plurality of meanings as assigned by contemporary philosophers.

The Historical-Critical Method

The historical-critical method focuses on the sacred documents that humans have produced within their history. When it was introduced in the 19th Century it presented a threat to the faith of many individuals. In many cases what had not been challenged in the past but accepted as truth was now understood as myth and therefore lacked a historical foundation. A philosophical understanding, in keeping with the historical-critical method, is needed to account for this shift in understanding in order to remove any threat to the faith of the individual and subsequently of the community. From my

perspective, the Historical-Critical Method, Textual Criticism, Form Criticism and the New Literary Criticism form departure points for this philosophical understanding.

Textual Criticism

One of the objectives of textual criticism is to trace the transmission of the evolution of the understanding of the text and the text itself through history. Textual criticism involves an objective as well as a subjective approach to interpreting the text as a phenomenon of the literate life. Historical reconstruction of a text requires a movement backwards in time, as it were, to show the evolution of the text as it was being composed. Historical transmission of a text requires a movement forwards in time, as it were, to trace the evolution of a text as it was understood by successive generations of interpreters. Textual criticism reveals the particular philosophical stages through which a believing community has passed, the significance of the language in which the text was written and, as well as, the deeper theological and philosophical issues the community needs to address in the present time and in the future.

Form Criticism

Form criticism addresses the shape a text took during its formation in the original cultural settings of the believing community. It focuses on the socio-cultural context of the text which includes the social and religious structures of community. What is sought from a

philosophical point of view in form criticism are the presumptions of the oral tradition during the transfer to the written tradition. Certain elements of an oral tradition, necessary to the identification of a particular community, eventually become foundational to the literary narrative of a particular community. A major focus beginning in the oral tradition, and subsequently included in the written history of the Hebrew people, is the perceived activity of God in the midst of the people. Through the centuries, the antecedent interpretations of scripture underwent an evolution and refinement. An addition in modern times is the sociological understanding reflecting the scientific character of the thinking of sociologists. Besides the discipline of sociology there is the addition in modern times of the disciplines of anthropology, the new economics, and the new political science. All of which are susceptible to a revised philosophical interpretation that will raise the level of anxiety among many philosophical, as well as common sense thinkers. This raised level of anxiety, or dis-organization, can be attributed to the presumed fact, now being challenged, that science has determined that meaning is exclusively located in the object analyzed, i.e., the texts, and not in the consciousness of the believer, i.e., in personal interpretation. Understood from a contemporary philosophical perspective such anxiety, caused by dis-organization, need not remain in effect. A phenomenological philosophical study should reveal the option that dis-organization need not heighten anxiety to the discerning philosopher.

Within the history of the Hebrew people when an existing tradition encountered a new existential context leading to new spiritual concern, or a new social understanding, the interpretation of its traditional texts was undertaken in light of its new experience, interpreted politically and theologically, of the activity of God in its midst. This, in fact became the work of the prophets. An interpreter's view of reality will influence the re-interpretation of the traditional texts and the written form they took, i.e., God is an agent and active in Israel's recorded history. This Hebraic view contrasts with the ancient Hellenic static view of their oral and written tradition.

The New Literary Criticism

As I see the evolutionary process in which the the new literary criticism is unfolding suggests an approach that will be acceptable to posthuman philosophy. What interests the existential critic is not the world of the immediate past, the ancient past, the modern or even the postmodern world, but the imaginative world created in the mind of the believer or reader in the present, and further stimulated by the literary text itself. Here reality is not understood as the concrete or substantial reality of classical philosophy, but as virtual reality of the future looming world of personal experience. I would argue that the integrity of experience on the present world is maintained not by the historical accuracy of the texts, but by the intellectual harmony of the believer, or reader, with the texts. In biblical studies virtual

reality imitates historical reality within the experience of the believer and thus establishes a true psychological experience. This means that the interpretation of the text, as a psychological genre, is within the mind of the believer and contrasts with the written genre of the text which is outside the mind of the believer. The psychological interpretation consists of a series of relationships within the mind of the reader rather than a set of meanings inherent in a physical text outside the mind of the reader. This series of psychological relationships is open to a plurality of philosophical interpretations whose boundaries are determined by these relationships themselves. However, these philosophical interpretations are of no help in determining what the text meant, but only assist in determining what the text means at the present moment to the believer or reader. To be noted is that the philosophical interpretations of the moment are capable of taking the faithful reader beyond him or herself to an advanced level of understanding.

Not to be forgotten, however, is that a text, classically or phenomenologically interpreted, is somehow rooted in the self-identity of the believing community as it lives in its present world. In the new literary criticism, the eschatological perspective is of minimal importance philosophically since it involves a great deal of speculation. From an existential philosophical perspective, however, questions of the normativity of the original meaning of the

texts for the present time arise concerning the interpretation of the texts. If they are normative, in what way? When interpreting the inspired texts of the Hebrew people, the philosopher must consider that fidelity to the covenant might call for different responses in different cultural contexts. Thus, faithful readers as well as secular readers bring differing perspectives to the interpretation of the texts, and often restate them according to their experiences and the circumstances of the times.

A contemporary philosophical interpretation of the Pentateuch from a phenomenological point of view, as I give it below, discloses these differing interpretations.²⁰ The book of GENESIS, as part of revealed scripture, does say something to the faithful about God that requires philosophical interpretation in addition to theological interpretation. There is a great distance between the pre-scientific Eastern world that gave rise to the understanding of reality outlined in the book of Genesis and our modern scientific Western world that gave rise to an intellectually advanced way of understanding reality in Genesis. Genesis is the story of the pre-history and history of Israel that became a nation only when it occupied the land of Canaan. The literary narrative is the form of the book of Genesis. However, it is understood by scholars to be a specific type of narrative known as a saga. In phenomenological philosophy, sagas

²⁰ I omit a philosophical consideration of the Book of Deuteronomy simply because it is a repetition of the Hebrew Law in preparation for the beginning of the Book of Joshua.

are based in fact but, through historical development they are expanded and enhanced by non-factual elements originating in tradition and in the author's imagination. Sagas are not correctly classified as myths. Myths are a symbolic representation fabricated in order to escape the limitations of literal interpretation. In the Hebrew saga of the beginning of creation the one true God is presented as a fact of experience. In the history of the Hebrew people, the non-factual elements of the saga had been imported as myths describing the activity of various divine powers operating within the lives of the peoples who were Israel's neighbours. While myths do appear in Genesis, the authors and interpreters of the text did not simply accept these foreign myths without changing and adapting them to conform to the distinctive Hebrew view of God and the cosmos.

In the book of EXODUS, Moses is a major figure whose name is of great significance, although he is not the author of this book.²¹ In the ancient Near East names implied the real existence of a person or life-form. Critical study has shown that the name of Moses carries the obligation to function "after the manner of Yahweh."²² It is

²¹ "In a Response dated June 27th 1906 the Pontifical Biblical Commission put Catholic exegetes on guard against [the] Documentary Theory and required them to maintain the 'substantial' Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch taken as a whole. ... In a letter to Cardinal Suhard (January 16th 1948) the Commission more explicitly conceded the existence of sources [to the book] and admitted a gradual growth of the Mosaic laws and of the historical narratives, a growth due to the social and religious conditions of later times." (*The Jerusalem Bible* (1966:7) Doubleday & Company.

²² *Collegeville Bible Commentary*, p. 85.

noteworthy that different traditions within the Exodus text present Moses' function from different perspectives and with different emphasis. One tradition presents Moses as simply a prophet acting on his own, whereas another tradition presents Aaron as having a significant role vis à vis Moses such that Moses almost appears to be somewhat upstaged. These traditions have it that (A) Moses appears as a messenger to the people on behalf of God, and (B) also as one who has been first addressed by God and then who subsequently speaks to Aaron to address the people. These are significant details in light of a phenomenological philosophy of communications and their written expression. As well, the plagues in Exodus may be interpreted from dual perspectives depending of the "source" tradition. In one tradition the purpose is to punish Pharaoh for refusing to let the people go, whereas in the other tradition the purpose is to establish Moses and Aaron as the legitimate representatives of God through their use of God's power. The reader may choose one or the other, or both.

Exodus also presents a concept of holiness unique to the Hebrew people. This unique understanding is philosophically significant in that it is intended to establish the one true reality of the presence of God in the midst of the people. This is demonstrated concretely in the text through the priesthood, the required sacrifices to God and the sacred rituals which have been commanded by God. A phenomenological philosophical interpretation of this textual fact

distinguishes revelation within two philosophical perspectives, i.e., an adequate cumulus understanding of the Old and New Testaments in contrast with the inadequate successive understanding of the Old and New Testaments where one interpretation replaces another. The phenomenological philosophical approach establishes more adequately the presence of Israel's invisible God empowering the People of God to progress from chaos to cosmos in the evolution of historical experience.

The book of LEVITICUS continues the theme of holiness since God is in the midst of the people and the people who worship God must be holy also. However, to be remembered, from a philosophical perspective, is that wholeness is a major characteristic of holiness. God is "whole," not fragmented. However, the "fragmented" People of God are to evolve in the presence of God to the wholeness of God's image, but not to a union with God, according to the revelation of Leviticus. In a word, wholeness reflects the life of God within the People of God in the book of Leviticus. Again, this presents a challenging interpretation for philosophers in the present time since the final redactors of this priestly book placed it in the wilderness experience of Israel as recounted in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. In reading NUMBERS, the philosopher must keep in mind that the reason for which Israel was sanctified by God was to ultimately occupy the promised land. Awkwardly, from a philosophical perspective, this occupation is to be accomplished

by force. The sequence of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers introduces the question of an evolutionary interpretation of the relationship between God and the chosen people. In this evolutionary interpretation philosophical issues to be reconsidered are the Hebrew concepts of body and soul, blood and life, thought and action, which are often applied to the same reality. Whereas the classical philosophers undertook reasoned thinking to demonstrate the holiness between God and the people; phenomenological philosophers recognize the concept of order as revealing or disclosing the character of the wholeness in God who is present to the believing community and to the individual believer.

Having briefly presented my purpose, that is, to prepare the reader's thinking for the recognition of phenomenological philosophy instead of classical philosophy in interpreting the scriptures (Hebrew and Christian) as an alternative perspective, I turn in the next chapter to the Wisdom Literature that is preserved in the scriptures. I admit that the Christian perspective, out of which I philosophize, has its own bias in interpreting the evolutionary history linking the Old and New Testaments. While not discrediting classical attempts at interpreting the bible, a phenomenological interpretation of the cultural experience of the author of the texts can reveal new insights to the contemporary philosopher's understanding of scripture.

PHILOSOPHY AND THE WISDOM LITERATURE OF ISRAEL

Given the great variation in the authorship of the wisdom books, their composition and content the tools of exegesis will adequately account for this. What I present here from a philosophical point of view may be applied to all Israel's wisdom literature with appropriate allowances for what the tools of biblical criticism reveal.

Israel's wisdom literature reflects an important insight into Israel's religious ideals, which are not exhausted by our knowledge of the Mosaic law or the revelation of the prophets. There is a further significance to Israel's wisdom literature in the book of Daniel. It is particularly recorded that the king of Babylon (a non-believer) sought the service of the intelligent and wise youth of Israel, taken captive in war, to be brought into his service after being taught the language and literature of Babylon (Daniel 1:1-4).

Of itself, the wisdom literature is not philosophical. Israel does not have, nor ever had, a philosophical tradition reflecting a unique cultural heritage, as was the case in ancient Greek history. Generally, the wisdom literature of Israel, examined from a historical point of view, shows:

- a minimal interest in the Pentateuch, the law of Moses or the unique call of Israel as topics for philosophical study
- little concern for the historicity of Israel as a people

- that the meaning of life is to be sought from experience, rather than from faith alone
- an eagerness to ponder the difficult problems of life; sickness, suffering, death, inequality of rich and poor, within the favour of God's presence, or lack of God's presence
- a limited curiosity about the world and the experience of all nations and peoples known to Israel
- a commitment to discover a proper moral life according to the experience of the presence of God.

In philosophically interpreting the above, one could conceive that Israel's wisdom literature is extremely secular in outlook with little regard for divine intervention. This secular outlook accounts for the interest to philosophers of Israel's wisdom books "because they maintain the focus on intellectual reflection about the world from a humanist's standpoint throughout."²³ Further, the focus on common questions of existence led some writers and sages of Israel to study somewhat significantly the literary works of their neighbouring nations. The first recorded study "took place in Egypt where Judaism came in contact with Hellenic culture, and the result was the development of an intense speculation among the Jews of Alexandria. ... With the disappearance of the Egyptian Diaspora its

²³ *Collegeville Bible Commentary*, p. 635.

philosophy vanished and only slight vestiges of its teachings can be traced to the Agadic literature.”²⁴

Israel's wisdom literature contrasts with its neighbours. Sumarian proverbs were harsh in comparison to Hebrew proverbs. Babylonian proverbs, however, tended to reflect the universe in terms of moral laws which, upon examination, appeared similar to Israel's perspective of the world. Generally Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Israelite wisdom literature recognized that the collective wisdom inherited by the community could not be matched by the wisdom gained in a single individual's lifetime. Also, long before Israel existed as a nation, Mesopotamian and Egyptian wisdom literature had become well established. Thus, one may conclude that these traditions highly influenced the thinking of the Israelites.

Wisdom's Two Approaches

The sages of Israel were not philosophers in any contemporary sense of the term. However, they were observers of human behaviour which makes their observations of interest to contemporary philosophers. The order they perceived in the universe arising from the One God, not philosophical reasoning, gave them the foundation for understanding their place in the scheme of things. Save for Israel's sages, the cause of this perceived order of the universe by

²⁴ Waxman, Meyer (1963) in *Dictionary of Philosophy: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (Dagobert D. Runes, ed) s. v. Jewish Philosophy.

Israel's neighbours was the activity of the gods acting collectively in regulating the universe. Atheism was not yet an idea in the minds of the sages of the Near East.

But the regular order of the universe did not go unchallenged as recorded in the books of Job and Qoheleth. These books relied more on enhancing a personal relationship with God than the directing behaviour in the ebb and flow of concrete living. While exploring the events of concrete life that needed explaining these authors did not suggest that God's purpose for humanity could be discerned through observing an ethical life. Enhancing a personal relationship with God lends itself more suitably to theological interpretation than philosophical interpretation. But theological interpretation does not exclude contemporary philosophers from addressing these books as literary phenomena.

The cosmos

The Hebrew experience, like all human experience, consisted of both personal and impersonal encounters. In ancient times natural disasters had little to do with human personality or activity (the Anthropocene perspective ²⁵ within philosophy is a contemporary point of view). However, natural disasters raised questions about the cosmos as a whole for the ancient sages. The personal salvation of

²⁵ The Anthropocene Epoch is an unofficial unit of geologic time, used to describe the most recent period in the earth's history when human activity started to have a significant impact on the planet's climate and ecosystems.

the people was somehow collectively expressed within the order of God's creation that the faithful experienced and the sages interpreted. For Israel's Eastern neighbours, time was cyclic as it was recognized in the regular pattern of birth, death and rebirth of the universe and in that all it contained. In the traditions of many of the Eastern cultures, repetition takes place until the purified and pristine origin of things has been reached. Israel's appreciation of time is different. It is linear in the sense that time does not repeat itself. There is a beginning point and an end point and the end point does not terminate at the beginning point. There is no belief of reincarnation in any form in the Hebrew understanding that culminates in a pristine and perfect state. Rather, God heals, thus re-creating and re-blessing the present world as had been done originally at creation and prior to the Fall of human kind. God is the ultimate agent in this perspective and a contemporary understanding of human agency presents new challenges for contemporary philosophers which were inconceivable to the ancients. Such new challenges occur through the interpretation of the notions of the Hebrew wisdom of good and of evil, of the wise and the foolish, and the human attitudes of humility and arrogance.

The Achievement of Israel's Wisdom

Before prophecy was born, wisdom was operative in the minds of the ancient sages. Thus, the two are connected in that prophets borrowed insights and expressions from the wisdom of the sages.

From a philosophical point of view what is of interest is that after the Exile, the best insights of foreign cultures were incorporated into Israel's wisdom traditions. This gave a broader context to Israel's Covenant Theology preventing a narrow nationalistic and exclusive interpretation of God's providence. Post-Exilic exposure to foreign cultures introduced philosophical perspectives into Israel's religious understanding that might not otherwise have become part of Israel's consciousness. It is with the advancement of the contemporary philosophy of mind that the following perspectives of Israel's wisdom are becoming more significant for contemporary philosophers in their understanding of scripture.

Phenomenological philosophers addressing the philosophy of mind are re-examining the following perspectives in Israel's wisdom literature:

- the emphasis on cause and effect
- the understanding of time
- the reliance on order
- God's revelation in creation
- the responsibility of human beings
- the personification of wisdom
- wisdom as a divine gift
- the meaning of suffering
- trust as a virtue
- the value of community

As a result of a phenomenological interpretation of these concepts, originally from outside Israel's pre-Exilic traditions, the nation's religious faith has faced challenges in current times with the result that the Israelite traditions of the faith have been weakened. One could argue the same for classical Western philosophy. Its failure to face the challenges of contemporary scientific insight has weakened its interpretive position in human understanding. Today, the expansion of human knowledge often takes no account of divine knowledge and allows no place for God in any present or future human intellectual development. In short, contemporary philosophy has become estranged from the faith thus raising concern of philosophers and destabilizing the belief of the serious inquirer, as well as, raising the anxiety levels of both. Thus, a revised philosophy of human understanding, i.e., a revised philosophical understanding of consciousness is needed to interpret scripture properly in future centuries.

To conclude this brief essay, I ask: Is the relationship between God and humanity as outlined in scriptural interpretation a problem or a mystery? Phenomenological philosophy can help determine the answer. A problem is something we focus on to solve after identifying all the parts of a puzzle. A mystery, on the other hand, envelopes one such that he or she can never get outside himself or herself to see a problem. In short, one lives a mystery, with all its

unanswered questions, and solves a problem by ascertaining the correct answer to the question.

In the wisdom literature of Israel there is no common philosophical theme that unites all the books. Each method of literary criticism reveals something particular about the text. No text, or method of critical scientific interpretation, presents the key to all scriptural revelation. But the philosopher who successfully relates these methods may obtain some sense of the original and current significance of the wisdom of Israel, oral and written, as it passed from generation to generation.

ADDENDUM

My Philosophical Perspective

I owe it to my readers, if they have persevered through the foregoing, to outline the philosophical perspective out of which I am currently reasoning. My purpose is not to offer variations on a theme within the practice of Western philosophy. Others have already done that as any learned academic can testify. Rather I restrict my philosophizing to what I can testify as being known and confirmed by my experience. My focus is the individual in society, not society as made up of a collection of individuals. I deliberately eliminate from consideration speculative ideas in my philosophizing. To use phenomenological language, I “bracket them” from consideration. This is not to deny that they have significance to some philosophers who require them for completion of their philosophical schema. By eliminating speculative ideas from my perspective of interpretation, I intend, by so doing, to identify and reveal something truly new thus making a contribution to the accumulation of philosophical knowledge in this present age.

My experience of life is that of multiplicity, plurality and diversity and not that of disclosing a unified purpose somehow hidden in my experience waiting to be disclosed. From my philosophical perspective there are no hidden meanings or hidden agendas in my life, put there by another agent. My present experience is in contrast to my inherited philosophical perspective that presumes a pre-

existing unified principle out of which plurality, multiplicity and diversity are perceived as parts making up a whole. My present experience begins as a “life in progress” the origin of which is unknown. The end of this “life in progress” is also unknown. In short, I live my experience between two unknowns. Philosophy deals with my experience between them and theology deals with my speculative interpretation about them.

Philosophically, I must work out an explanation of my experience which may be similar to another, but not identical to another philosopher. I must express my experience in an idea or ideas that fit this present age and are understandable by others living in this same age. This effort results in the identification of relationships among all things that I experience whether they are animate or inanimate.

As an existential observer in the world, I must compare my experience with the recorded realizations or beliefs of the philosophers of the past. And since I do not experience, think, nor live within a vacuum, I cannot experience the future, nor the past in the present. Thus, I omit speculation about them in my philosophizing. My philosophizing is not theoretical. My philosophy is not an activity characterized by the sense common to an uncritical thinking humanity, i.e., common sense. My philosophy is a critical intellectual activity of interpretation that takes into

account external observable facts that appear, at times, to contradict common sense. Observing sunrises and sunsets is a case in point. To the observer on earth common sense suggests that the sun is undergoing a movement of rising and setting from the observer's perspective sensing that he or she is stationary. In fact it is the opposite as critical knowledge demonstrates. The sun is stationary and the observer on earth moves about the sun.

Most of humanity regulates its life through common sense which seems to be acquired from general experiences in life. These lessons learned from human experience are "common" to human culture regardless of variations of time and place. Philosophy, on the other hand, is an ordered and reasoned explanation of experience, and in Western culture has its origin in the particular philosophical perspective of the ancient Greeks which evolved to the present "laws of knowledge," or, which is the same thing, "critical reasoning."

Operating on instinct, animals lack the capacity to abstract from their experience through critical reasoning. Humans, however, knowing how to reason critically can direct their activity to achieve a more productive and happy life. In short, critical reasoning allows humans to be free from the constraints of nature. It is in this freedom from nature that the "arts," born of human creativity, assigns human life a purpose that mere animal life lacks.

Instinct, in human beings, preceded philosophy. Infrahuman life, it seems, does not arise above instinct to a philosophical life. I do not consider the common sense approach to human life to be philosophy, but merely coping strategy in interpreting experience. From my perspective, the notion of reasoned authority, in whatever context, best describes the difference between common sense and philosophy in this present age. In short, philosophy possesses a reasoned authority that naïve common sense lacks. Once authoritative interpretation of experience has been established within a culture, there is no going back to a pre-authoritative common sense. A sense of power accompanies reasoned authority and this usually means some form of compulsion by the superior over the inferior. Naturally, democratic authority is to be preferred over tyrannical authority for the betterment of human society. However, common sense does not exercise this type of compelling power, but rather is a voluntary action on the part of the members of society, individually and collectively.

I do not consider the truth of common sense to be the highest form of knowledge, as it were, given the large margin of error in the interpretation of an uncritical understanding of human experience. Philosophy, employing the use of reason, is the higher form of knowledge due to the narrower margin of error in understanding. That is to say that in the Western philosophical perspective the sciences are more accurate in describing the facts of life than the

anecdotal interpretation of human experience.

The sciences are not to discount or exclude the arts, however. It is through the arts that humans create a proper image of themselves. Articulated through creativity, and given shape through artistic fashioning, the arts mark the “qualitative progress” of human life in this world through the stages of human evolution. Human understanding, is not compelled to evolve, it may choose to stagnate such as when humans abdicate their responsibility to improve upon, or enhance the foundational and established values by previous generations. But since evolutionary activity proceeds in one direction only, human experience reveals that there is no returning to a supposed unified beginning of existence, but only a forward progress to a future plurality, multiplicity and diversity of human life. This progress to a future life opens the possibility for humanity to determine and re-create its own true purpose.

It will be for the reader to decide whether he or she has encountered the experiences I describe, even if differently interpreted by other individuals. It may be the case that those living in this age will interpret their experience uniquely as they understand it. In other words, they may find no precedent for the manner in which they interpret their experience or how it has come to be understood. In short, past generations did not have the sophisticated interpretive tools that are available to contemporary philosophers. Therefore,

any application of an *a priori* principle in contemporary interpretation may not suffice in all cases. Further, *a priori* principles derived from past experience, may not always be adequate for an explanation of current human experience since they are found to be too narrow.

Except for philosophy, every other art such as poetry, music, painting, literature, etc. does not necessarily disclose the interpretive rules by which it is undertaken. The existential philosopher cannot conduct the art of philosophy unless the rules and norms by which he or she proceeds are openly declared. There is no such thing as a gnostic philosophy. Common to all Gnosticism is the intellectual attempt to transcend rational thought by means of intuition. Further, in the art of existential philosophy, theory and practice go hand in hand and there is no practice without theory and no theory without practice. The two are distinguishable but not separable. Similar to the manner that body and soul comprise a person, theory and practice comprise an existential philosophy.

Philosophizing about what happens between an unknown beginning and an unknown end, human attention must be focused on what is actually experienced in the present moment and whether the truth of interpretation represents human experience, the past notwithstanding. In contemporary existential interpretation humans must practice a critical “that was then, this is now” attitude to attain

the truth of human experience. Common sense is not of sufficient breadth, or sophistication of understanding, to achieve this knowledge. Nor is science sufficiently insightful to achieve the truth of human experience. Thus, philosophy is required to interpret both common sense and science to achieve the truth of human understanding.

This does not mean, however, that each individual can exist, live, think and act independently without regard for the other. Individualism is rejected, whereas individuality is acknowledged in the existential philosophical perspective. Each individual fashions his or her identity from within community given the limitations of his or her skills and talents in life. That is to say one's individuality is acquired, not bestowed by any external agency. It is the task of humanity, as a collection of individuals, to fashion itself by observing itself and correcting itself through reason and thus transcend common sense. However, not everyone is equally capable of such a task in life.

Appendix

The passages previously selected from Horstman are presented below and contain some cross references to the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) for the sake of the interested reader. My intention is to illustrate that Horstman's perspective, antecedent to Vatican II, is to some degree evident in the contemporary language of the Fathers of the Council.²⁶

An Introduction to the Proper Reading of the Sacred Book

*What more useful work, then, can be undertaken both for God's glory, for the spread of the true Church, and for the edification of the faithful, than following the instructions of the Church herself to do all in one's power to make easy of access and profitable to the soul, this Word of God which in His mercy and goodness He has wished should be preserved for our Benefit? (p. 3)*²⁷

²⁶ *Dei Verbum* English translation from Flannery, Austin (1996) *Vatican Council II* Costello Publishing, New York and Dominican Publications, Ireland.

²⁷ Not posing a question, but setting forth a purpose in paragraph 1 the synod "wants the whole world to hear the summons to salvation, so that through hearing it may believe, through belief it may hope, through hope it may come to love." In para. 12 the "useful work" the Fathers have in mind is "that the interpreters of sacred scripture, if they are to ascertain what God has wished to communicate to us, should carefully search out the meaning which the sacred writers really had in mind, that meaning which God had thought well to manifest through the medium of their words." The Fathers also comment in para. 22 that "access to sacred scripture ought to be widely available to the christian faithful." In addition, however, in the same paragraph the synod recommends the use of "suitable and correct translations" that are made jointly with other churches to all Christians. Not only Catholic exegetes, but others as well who work in the field of theology, "using appropriate techniques they

*The Fathers of the Church called these books “holy” and “divine,” and frequently say that God Himself is “their Author” (p. 4) [emphasis in the original].*²⁸

*In what relation does the Church stand to Scripture? [Horstman asks.] ... Historically, it is certain that in point of time the Church precedes the Scriptures. She was in existence, established and perfect, possessing full and complete authority, before there ever was any question of the scriptures. ... Our divine Master appears. He preaches. He commands His disciples to **preach** his throughout the whole world (Matt. 28:19-20), but He writes nothing Himself, neither does He command anyone else to write. ... Even as regards the New Testament, we know from St. Irenaeus²⁹ that at the end of the second century there were still many churches that believed all the doctrines of the Apostles without ever having received the Word of God communicated to them in written form. “If the Apostles,” he says, “had not left any writings, would it not have been our duty to be guided by the rule of that tradition which they delivered to those to whom they entrusted the churches? — a rule asserted by many barbarous nations believing in Christ who, not possessing any written language, have the words of salvation written without paper and ink in their hearts by the Spirit and carefully preserve the*

should together set about examining and explaining the sacred texts in such a way that as many as possible of those who are ministers of God’s word may be able to dispense fruitfully the nourishment of the scriptures to the people of God.” (Para. 23) I remark that the Fathers make no mention of exegesis as a philosophical understanding, but only a theological one.

²⁸ As sacred scripture (para. 7 and throughout) the authorship of the Old and New Testaments, written under the inspiration of the holy Spirit, (para. 11) the Council notes that “they have God as their author” who, in choosing certain men, “it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more.”

²⁹ Lived during the first half of the 2nd Century but the exact dates are disputed by scholars.

ancient doctrines delivered to them.” Adv.Haeres, 1, iii., c. 4. (p. 5-6) [emphasis in the original].³⁰

*But beyond those regions in which Greek was known, St Thomas preached the Gospel to the Indians, St Bartholomew to the Parthians, St Thaddeus in Mesopotamia, other Apostles in Spain, yet antiquity has not handed down to us an Indian or a Scythian translation or an African text of the Scriptures. We know of only two ancient translations of the original text of the New Testament, the ancient Latin Vulgate, made toward the end of the first or the beginning of the second century, and the Syriac (p. 7).*³¹

*These reasons and facts show conclusively, that the Church and the Gospel of Jesus Christ do not rest upon the written word of the New Testament as upon their foundation, as well as, that the Bible is not the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ.*³² *What we have said concerning the Church and its existence before the Scripture we can say also of each member of the Church. If a man have but faith in the Church*

³⁰ The synod does not interpret or speak of the Church as preceding the scriptures in the manner of Horstman. Rather, the original unwritten apostolic preaching “is expressed in a special way in the inspired books” (para. 8) and is preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time. The synod recognizes a developed understanding that, in this case, does not preserve Horstman’s perspective. In paragraph 10 the synod further teaches that “in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred tradition, sacred scripture and the magisterium of the church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others.”

³¹ With respect to the known translations of the original text of the New Testament, the synod expands Horstman’s perspective when it states dogmatically that “the church, from the very beginning, made its own the ancient translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint; it honors also the other eastern translations, and the Latin translations, especially that known as the Vulgate” (para. 22).

³² In the Council’s words: “Tradition and scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the word of God, which is entrusted to the church.” (Para. 10)

of Christ and receive her baptism, he is a Christian in any country of the world, whether he know how to read or not, whether he be acquainted with the existence of the inspired books or be ignorant of it. In the early days of the Church the law of secrecy required that the most sublime mysteries of Christianity, such as the eucharist, should be known to the initiated only — that is to say, to Christians thoroughly confirmed and proven in the faith. “Many hermits,” says St. Augustine, “lived in the desert, having with them faith, hope and charity, but without the sacred books.” It is clear, therefore, that the Church flourished and brought forth fruit before the scriptures of the New Testament existed (p. 7).³³

The New Testament bears on its face the evidence that it was addressed to men who already believed and were already instructed — partially at least — in the truths it teaches or enforces, and that it was not written to teach the faith to such as had no knowledge of it, but to correct errors, to present more fully the faith on certain points.³⁴ No one can read it without perceiving that it neither is, nor professes to be, the original medium of the Christian revelation, but from first to last supposes a revelation previously made, the true religion to have been already taught and instructions in it already received. From these facts it follows that a knowledge of the inspired writings is not necessary to salvation, and furthermore, that the Church approves herself to men as a Divine authority, independently of the Holy Scriptures (p. 7).³⁵

³³ This distinction of a “scripture-less church” suggesting an independent existence of a church of apostolic preaching does not appear to be maintained with any credibility in *Dei Verbum*.

³⁴ Rather than teach the faith through scripture, and correct errors, the synod “wants the whole world to hear the summons to salvation, so that through hearing it may believe, through belief it may hope, through hope it may come to love.” (Prologue)

³⁵ This dichotomous historical interpretation is not maintained in *Dei Verbum*. Para. 21 states: “The church has always venerated the Body of the Lord, in that it never ceases, above all in the sacred liturgy, to partake of the bread of life and to offer it to the faithful from the one table of the word of God and the Body of Christ.” Further, in para. 24 the Council

As the Church existed before the Scriptures; as the Church established the authenticity and Divine inspiration of the same, so also is it certain that it has always belonged the Church, and to her alone, to give that authoritative interpretation of the Scriptures which in matters of faith and morals ought to determine their meaning with supreme authority obligatory on all (p. 9).³⁶

Scripture, then, needs interpretation.³⁷ It is with this written law as with all others. Whilst they remain superior to the individuals whom they designate as their interpreters, the Scriptures need to have their exact meaning, the extent of their application, their exceptions, etc., determined according to necessity by a counsel of state which lives, speaks, explains its decisions and can ensure obedience. Now, at all times and everywhere, the Church has claimed the right of

states: “Sacred theology relies on the written word of God, taken together with sacred tradition, as its permanent foundation.”

³⁶ One could argue that Horstman’s intent is summed up, albeit with different emphasis, in the Prologue to the Constitution. “Following, then, in the steps of the councils of Trent and Vatican I, this synod wishes to set forth the authentic teaching on divine revelation and its transmission.” And in para. 10 the synod teaches: “But the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of tradition, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the church alone. ... This magisterium is not superior to the word of God, but is rather its servant.” The obligation of the faithful to accept this teaching arises from the Constitution’s dogmatic status, I would argue.

³⁷ The text in *Dei Verbum* reads: “Seeing that, in sacred scripture, God speaks through human beings in human fashion, it follows that the interpreters of sacred scripture, if they are to ascertain what God has wished to communicate to us, should carefully search out the meaning which the sacred writers really had in mind, that meaning which God had thought well to manifest through the medium of their words. In determining the intention of the sacred writers, attention must be paid, among other things, to *literary genres*.” (Para. 12)

interpreting the Scriptures with supreme authority through her chief pastors, but principally through her Head (p. 10).³⁸

For as Christ does not favor His Church with new revelations, the teaching she must impart to the world can have no other subject-matter than the utterances of the Incarnate Word — utterances consigned to and preserved in Scripture and Tradition. Her whole office, therefore, is to tell us what this divine doctrine is, and to verify and establish its true sense (p. 11).³⁹

³⁸ “For, of course, all that has been said about the manner of interpreting scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the church which exercises the divinely conferred commission and ministry of watching over and interpreting the word of God.” (Para. 12) Note the shift from the individually ordained members of the church to the collectivity of the church.

³⁹ Also, in para. 12 the Council interprets the church’s office in a contemporary context. “But since sacred scripture must be read and interpreted with its divine authorship in mind, no less attention must be devoted the the content and unity of the whole of scripture, taking into account the tradition of the entire church and the analogy of faith, if we are to derive their true meaning from the sacred texts.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

EXAMINERS' REPORT

European-American University

Date: 1 July 2010

Reference: ASOI/07/2010

Student: Allan Maurice Savage

Degree: Doctor of Letters

The candidate presented a portfolio of publications for assessment accompanied by a critical commentary in line for the regulations for the degree entitled "Interdisciplinary Insights Applied within a Theological Context". The portfolio was extremely wide-ranging and included work principally in the area of theology and secondarily in the areas of philosophy and psychology.

[The list of previously granted credentials at degree level has been omitted.]

In addition to previous degree awards and ministerial appointments, the portfolio contained two testimonials from the Bishop of Algoma attesting to his appreciation and high regard for the candidate's work in ministry.

[The list of publications books, booklets and articles for evaluation has been omitted.]

The evidence of achievement in line with the Regulations for the granting of the degree of Doctor of Letters by published work was amply displayed. The high level and scope of the work undertaken was clearly evidenced and offered a contribution to scholarship that was both original and unusually broadly-based. It was clear that the candidate had thoroughly absorbed the corpus of existing thought in his chosen areas, and had shown himself to be both a cogent expositor of the scholarship of others and an original thinker in his own right.

The candidate supplied a detailed exegesis in his critical commentary that considered each submitted work in turn. The examiners greatly appreciated the role of this approach in clarifying the intentions,

methodology and context of the works concerned. The candidate also included a list of the libraries which have acquired at least one of his books. He concludes that "their acceptance tells me they determined that my books "have something to say" of academic value to the university community and perhaps to the civic community at large." The examiners endorse this conclusion and commend the work involved accordingly.

It is invidious and necessarily subjective to single out examples of particular work in a submission that was uniformly impressive, but the three books "A Phenomenological Understanding of Certain Liturgical Texts: The Anglican Collects for Advent and the Roman Catholic Collects for Lent", "Faith, Hope and Charity as Character Traits in Adler's Individual Psychology with Related Essays in Spirituality and Phenomenology" and "The Ecology: A "New to You" View (An Orthodox Theological Ecology)" were held by the examiners to be of particular merit.

The examiners felt in summary that the submission was of an exemplary quality and reflected exceptional achievement over a sustained period of time. The award of a higher doctorate does not permit the conferral of marks of distinction, but in this case it was felt that the submission was such as to have merited this accolade were it to have been available.

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